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ABSTRACT

Even young children can be encouraged to write through the use of individual communication, group discussions, and activities that involve rhythms and music. Such activities create a classroom of children who feel comfortable and happy, who share a rapport with their peers and others throughout the school building, and who feel free to express themselves. In this classroom students come to understand that reading is their "talk and ideas" written down. To be able to write well, the children need to be involved in many prewriting activities that are based on first-hand experiences and enable children to experiment with language. Models of literature must be presented through reading aloud or storytelling. Sentence patterns can be provided in which students substitute their own words. After children have been involved in a variety of writing experiences, they can improve the quality of their writing through writing workshops during which the students edit one another's writing and provide feedback for improving it. The effort results in a published book of the children's writing, which also provides the children with a reason for rewriting. (Writing ideas are suggested throughout the paper.) (HOD)

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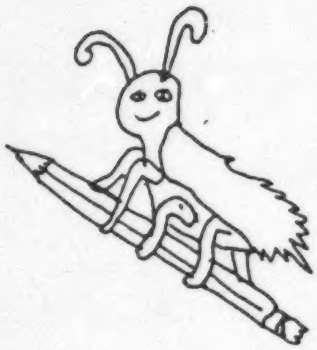
WRITING BUGS BECOME

READING BUGS



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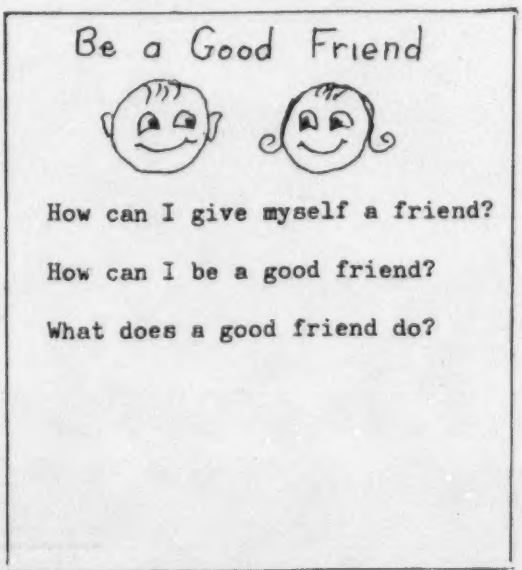
WRITING BUGS BECOME READING BUGS

Little people can write! They are just waiting for the encouragement and freedom to express their imagination and creativity. A teacher who sets the stage by creating an atmosphere of happiness, freedom of expression and enthusiasm through motivating activities will unfold an endless source of creative ideas from her students. Further, she will find satisfaction and support for the theory "Writing Bugs" become "Reading Bugs."

In the first grade, as I begin to set the stage for the year, my goals are to have each child feel comfortable and happy in the classroom and in learning, to feel the importance of himself/herself as a special individual, to feel the importance of others, to cooperate and accept responsibility for himself/herself and the task to be accomplished. These are the foundations for developing a unity and closeness in the classroom.

The physical setting plays an important part in reaching the goals. My room, which is a large colorful room, has many hanging charts which foster the feeling of warmth, cooperation and consideration. We discuss what each suggestion means, how we can begin doing some of these, and what it will mean to ourselves and others.



The room extends out into the hall where there are Happy Huts in which a small group can work, plus partitions that can be moved to make space to meet a group's need. The room also extends out on the steps of the school when weather permits.

The physical setting then, lends itself to a feeling of responsibility and rapport while the students work with less immediate supervision in small groups, with a partner or individually. It lends itself to a feeling of freedom to work independently and for children to express themselves orally and in writing, as well as in other academic areas.

The children learn they can move around the room, hall and steps, make choices of activities on their own levels and choose a partner or group with whom to work. They also learn that in order to have this privilege they need to handle themselves in a responsible manner.

Other tools for reaching the goals are individual communication, group discussions and activities. Each child is greeted individually in the morning and dismissed at the end of the day with a positive comment. We discuss the fact that, "A day is as good as you make it." We list specific ways we can have a good day (sometimes using the charts). These plans are recorded in a diary.

The children learn to mirror a leader for the bathroom routine when the whole class goes at one time, such as washing for lunch. A leader does movements slowly while others follow. When everyone is back in line, the leader counts the students and they return to the classroom. This develops a sense of responsibility for working together.

Rhythms help children feel comfortable. Expressing themselves through body motions and rhythms is the beginning step to feeling free to express themselves orally as well as in writing. They quickly learn to follow rhythm charts, snapping and clapping patterns.

Rhythms can also be used to get the children's attention. I may clap a pattern and say, "Everybody look at me." They repeat the pattern and the sentence.

Teacher: This is the message.

Class: This is the message.

The message may be my hand on my nose which means, "You're voices are too loud."

Music is another important aid in reaching our goals. Soft music is played throughout the day. We sing several songs in the morning, while lining up for activities and as we walk through the hall to art, gym, music and lunch.

We sing directions. I may sing, "You may not believe it, but I'll tell you and it's true; It's time for lunch now, so this is what we'll do. Go to your desk, stand up straight; Hurry up and don't be late." or "Come to the door quietly; Hurry up and look at me." With children all over the room and hall, it's most pleasant and a quick way to get them ready for the next activity. The children love it; they sing along which adds to the happy atmosphere.

Our songs are many but the favorites are those which include their names. When we use one name, we use them all because each little face shows that it's anxiously waiting for his or her name. Some of these favorite songs that give individual recognition are: Who is important? If anyone asks you who I am. Whose name is Laura? He's got Amy Koch in his hands. Others are:

We are the happiest class in the world.

We are the luckiest class in the world.

I'm glad that I am me.

If you're happy and you know it.

It's all about love.

Positive one to one communication between students helps strengthen the class bond. We have a small stuffed animal that is passed from friend to friend.

The child who has it may take it to a friend whenever he/she chooses, but he/she must do or say something that makes both of them feel better. It may be a wink, smile or compliment. At first compliments or positive statements may be embarassing for some children. Or they may be role playing as they begin to participate, but an observer can see it become a part of the child quickly.

We also have a pocket chart for the child who has more difficulty expressing himself/herself. He/she may go to the chart for a printed compliment to give a friend. These statements are soon found all around the school as the children begin to feel free to express their feelings to the principal, secretary, aides and others in the building.

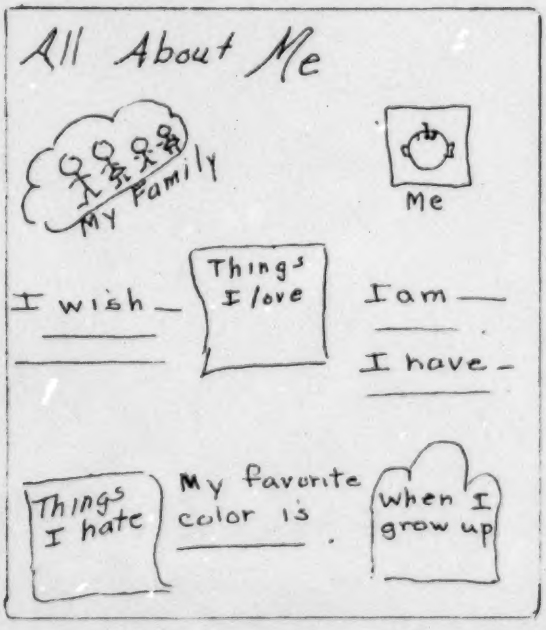
The class is beginning to develop a rapport in the classroom and with the whole school family. Then, for visitors, we have a basket of cards. The children feel free to go to the basket and hand one to a visitor. It says, "We're glad you came to our room."

Another delight is the Warm Fuzzy Car Wash. A child who is unhappy walks through two lines of friends who touch him/her and say, "I like you." "You're nice." "I like your smile." A child cannot walk through the car wash without smiling. After introducing the car wash, I no longer am the one who suggests it. Something happens and someone will say, "She'll feel better when she goes through the car wash."

Smiles come along with "Our Special Student Charts." Each child has a chart made and displayed. Everyone contributes a statement or two for each chart. The child for whom the chart is being made, of course, feels very special. The activity also encourages playing with the English language, seeking descriptive words, using similies, (She's a butterfly) and even poetry (She's a white cloud in the sky).

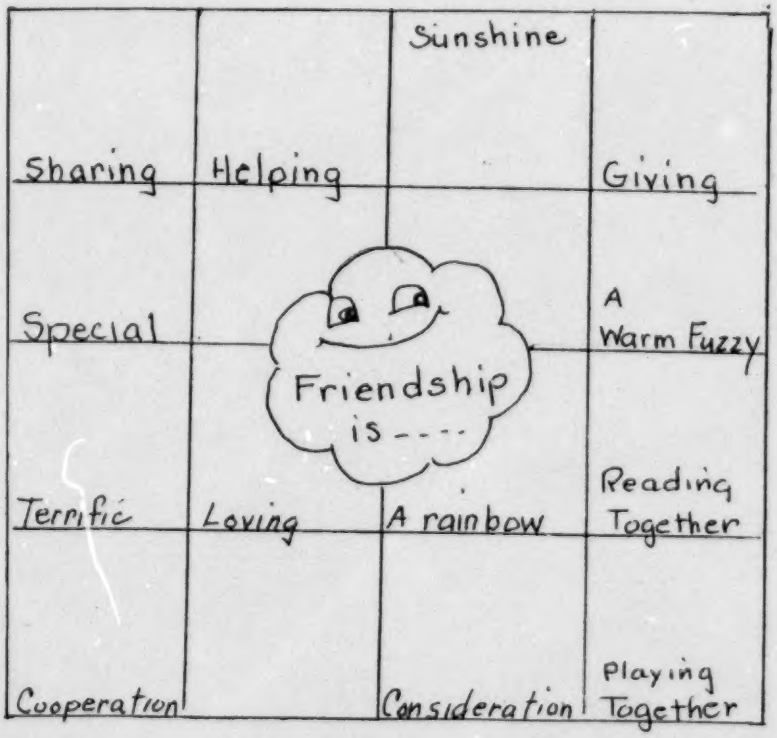
Awareness of working together is strengthened as the class designs a skirt for their teacher. Each child has a square and illustrates his/her interpretation of the skirt's theme, which the class has predetermined by vote. It may be happiness, circus, warm fuzzy or whatever.

"All About Me" charts are displayed as a group or as student of the week.



Each chart has a photograph of the student, a drawing of his/her family, a list of his/her favorite things and things he/she doesn't like, three wishes, what he/she wants to be when he/she grows up, plus his/her name, weight, height and favorite color.

The "Friendship Quilt" is a highlight. It's a 60" x 60" quilt with a smiling face labeled, "Friendship is..." A block with a statement and picture describing friendship is made by each child. Friendship is sharing, helping, cooperation, etc. After everyone in the class has had an opportunity to take the quilt home for one night to sleep surrounded by his/her friends, the quilt is presented to a hospital. The presentation itself is a rich experience for both children and adults.



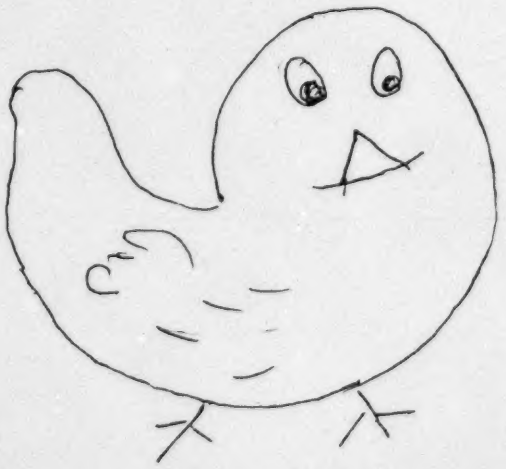
Is too much time taken away from academic work by developing and reaching these goals? NO! By taking a few minutes throughout the day to create a rapport and happy atmosphere, academic learning is acutally enhanced and problems are quickly settled with a reminder of an early morning discussion, or referral to a chart or the plan for the day. I call it "preventive guidance." The time saved with the elimination of long dissertations replaced by signals and reminders, leaves more time for reading, writing and other academic areas.

Does all this have anything to do with writing and reading? YES! We have a class that feels comfortable, happy, shares a rapport with its peers and others throughout the building. And...most importantly...we have a class of students who feels free to express itself.

There are some who feel children can't write or they question how to have them begin. Every class has a few who are ready to write. With a little encouragement, ideas suggested and/or direction in phonetic spelling, they are soon writing simple stories. As these children begin to read their stories to the class, others are motivated and soon there is a group of enthusiastic, proud, young authors. As we begin, the majority of first graders, dictate their stories and copy them later.

Early in the school year, each child in 11[illegible], finger-painted, "The Funniest Animal I Ever Saw" and wrote a story about his/her picture. The child who had difficulty forming letters and spacing wrote one sentence or had the teacher write the whole story.

Dictated: This is Freddie Fabulous.
I met him at the park.



A child who was ready to write: This is a person from Mars. He does my school work. He likes ma and I like him. I met him skiing.

ANOTHER BEGINNING APPROACH is to have the children complete a simple sentence, such as: A smile is_____. Happiness is_____. A friend is_____. The teacher writes the beginning of the sentence on the board. The words the children suggest to complete the sentence are listed on the board.

Students are encouraged to use other words also. They may ask for the spelling of these additional words at first, but are expected to begin phonetic spelling and to use pictionaries and readers very soon.

A little later the beginning sentences call for short phrases. Then the class suggests short phrases which are also listed on the board.

I am important because	I'm the only one just like me.
	I have brown hair.
	I do my best work.
	I am the fastest one in my family.
	I can read.
	I am nice to others.

A beginning sentence writing experience can develop from a word ladder containing reading words and students' names. The children select words from their reading vocabulary, combine these with a friend's name and write simple sentences. Example: Josh hid in the grass.

Word Ladder		Sun Up
The sun	hid	up
The bug	was	in the grass
A pig	ran	in the pond
A duck	lost	away
Amy	Susie	Kevin
Kit	Jay	Alice

We spend time discussing story starters. What would you do if:...an airplane landed in your yard?...you landed on a chocolate bar? The children tell how they might complete the story. The teacher tells how she might complete the story. The teacher's story can be long, with many parts and ideas to stimulate the students' thinking.

As 112 progressed in writing last fall, each child wrote a story using the story starter, "A Ghost Came into 112." Just a few children needed to dictate their story at this time.

Dictated

A ghost came into 112.
Ian ran up the clock and
Kevin R. his under the
reading table.

More Ready to Write

A ghost came into 112. i said i like you he said i like you. we played hit the tree. it was an apple tree i hit it some apples fell down. we had apples.

At one point, a suggested beginning, middle and ending is added to the story starters. This helps children develop awareness of the elements of a story.

One day a horse walked into my bedroom.
I
I
The horse
Then
At last

Story starters are on the board daily. Story starters are in Think Tanks around the room. Two Think Tanks are very popular. One contains the names of the students and the other silly activities. A child who takes a card from each tank might draw: Amy riding an octopus

Josh playing baseball with a monkey

These nonsense stories are about a friend. The stories build rapport and motivate young students to write.

We also have a Writing Center which includes different kinds and shapes of paper, glue, rulers, yarn and other materials to motivate students to create a picture or design and write about it. The center has a suggested theme with story starters such as: I found some magic glasses. When I put them on,...

If I had magic shoes, I would...

A brownie asked me to a Wee Folks Party. I... We...

When it was over,...

Party days provide a variety of audiences, stimulation and enjoyment. We have a Birthday Party for Mr. Fig. Mr. Fig is a magic character in a preprimer. On this day activities include:

1. Birthday cards hidden around the room with scrambled sentences.
2. Writing stories from the Mr. Fig's story starter chart.

3. Each child reading his/her story about Mr. Fig and any other stories he/she has written in his journal to a fourth grade student.
4. Each child reading his/her story to a whole third grade class.
5. Putting the stories in book form and presenting it to the library. With the principal and librarian present, assuring the class of the importance of having a new book written by authors of our school, excitement and proudness prevail.

Other days that follow a similar format might be:

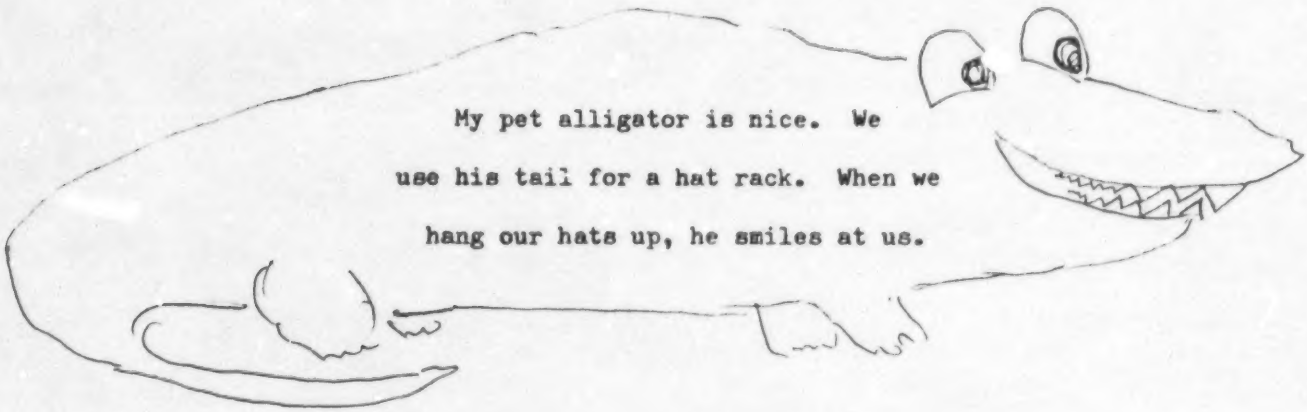
Cheese Day when everyone wears yellow, mouse tales are written and samples of cheeses are available all day.

Red Day when everyone wears red, writes and paints with red, and red food is served.

Popcorn Day when the number of pounds consumed is discussed, pictures are made of popcorn and stories are written.

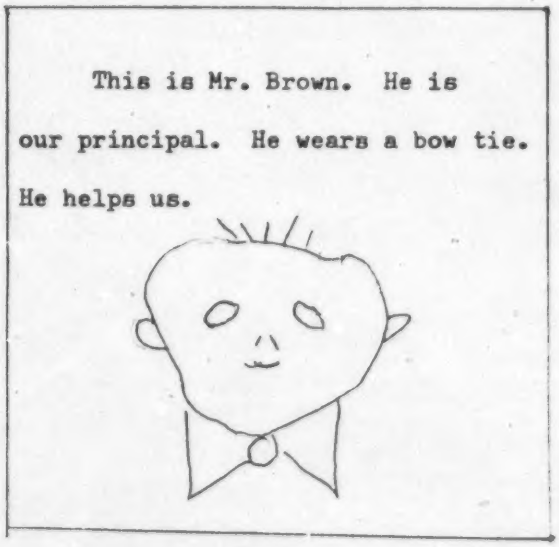
During the first part of March, the class makes a magic house, green, of course. Food is placed in the house as we leave school each day, just in case a brownie might be hiding in a closet near by. The brownie leaves us notes, thanking us for the home and food, and we write him notes. We also write magic stories about our brownie and other Wee Folk.

A small group may discuss and decide on a theme about which to write. It may be dinosaurs, turtles, pigs or whatever they choose. They write stories and reports in shaped books and papier mache' the figure of the theme. Classes have made Steggie, a 12 foot dinosaur, Rusty, a 3 foot turtle, and Terrifying George, an 11 foot alligator.

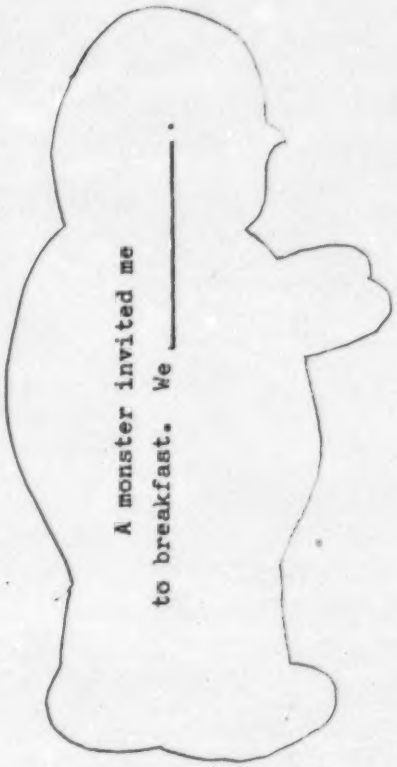


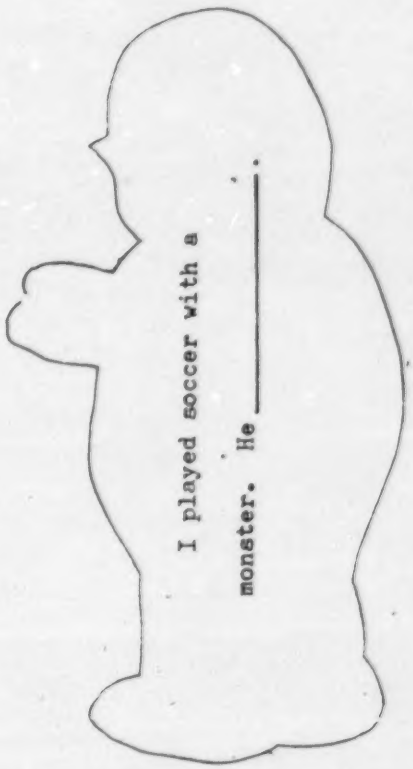
At the beginning of the year, the children bring or are given a spiral notebook which we call a journal. They add stories to their journals regularly. This notebook provides the children with a collection of their original stories that shows their progress throughout the year. From time to time, as the stories are read to the class, a child will ask to have a story edited so it can be published either in an individual child's book or in a class publication.

Still other activities include Hole Stories, a Crazy Creature Zoo and a Monster Story Starter Chart. For the Hole Stories, a large piece of paper, with different shaped holes, are given each child. The children decide what the hole reminds them of, illustrate it and write a story.



For the Crazy Creature Zoo, the children draw pictures of crazy creatures and write stories. Monsters are intriguing to young children so this is a good source of motivation. Story starters are in the pocket of a monster chart on monster-shaped cards. The children write stories and illustrate them.





A poetry writing unit can be a valuable experience for a young writer. Beginning steps in poetry are reading a great deal of poetry to the children and having many books available for children to read. Read a poem with lights out and soft music playing, followed by a discussion and list of things they saw as the poem was read. Read the poem, Band-Aid, by Shel Silverstein, at which time the teacher enters the room with Band-Aids covering all the areas of the body mentioned in the poem.

After reading the poem, Sugar Plum Tree, by Eugene Field, make a tree as the poem describes, using the sugar plums for poem starters. The poem starters could be:

Beautiful is_____.

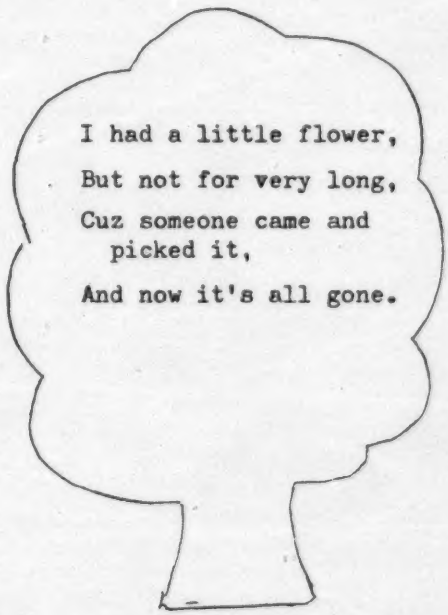
I gave myself a present by making a friend. My friend is_____.

A piece of sky broke off and fell right into my_____.

Me, I am glad I am me!
If I was not me, then I couldn't climb a tree,
Or be stung by a bee.
So I'm glad I'M ME!

Another idea is to have children copy simple poems or parts of poems and illustrate. When given pastel crayons with which to copy and illustrate poetry, the children become very involved in the mood of the poem and its form. Each illustration shows a different interpretation.

As the children begin to write simple poems, they are edited and published in a Poetry Book, either as a class or individual publication.



The stories and poems that you have read are not all written by top students. Some were written by children who will be repeating first grade and others by main-streamed students. They all can write and when they do, it helps in other areas, one being reading. Transferring the spoken word into the written word, then reading these words back is supportive reading activity. Even the child who may be struggling with reading, will many times sound out words when writing or may have words spelled for him and remember that word/words when reading his story to the class. Main idea is reinforced when the child chooses a title for his/her story.

The children quickly learn and love to use the terms journal, edit and publish. But we begin simply and progress step by step from class unity, motivation, pre-writing activities, writing, editing, publishing and seeking a variety of audiences.

I read a great deal to the class. Trees are hanging around the room waiting for synonyms, antonyms, homophones, compound words and contractions to be added to the appropriate tree which the children find as a source of challenge and enjoyment.

We discuss story ideas at length and write daily. "We" includes the teacher's writing. The children love to have their teacher participate and it is another way for the teacher to say how important and enjoyable writing can be.

Some teachers may feel that there is no time for the children to write and read stories this often. Time is probably the biggest concern a teacher may have as she begins to plan for extended writing and it is a factor.

The mos successful method I have found is to designate time slots and share these slots with other related activities such as Sustained Reading. The children write stories in their free time daily, usually by choice. Once or twice a week we have a designated time for the whole class to write. Then a daily

15 minute slot is designated for the children to read their stories to the class. This time is shared with Sustained Reading. One week we have Sustained Reading on three days and the other two days the children read their stories. The next week we reverse the shared time.

Something exciting happens in a classroom when children are enthusiastically creating. A dimension is added to the rapport as the students help each other spell words, share their art ability and their stories individually and give praise to one another as the stories are read to the whole class. One may hear a child say, "I can't draw an alligator. Would you draw it for me?" Or a friend may say as a child begins to read his/her story to the class, "Oh, I like this one. It's my favorite." Or when a child has completed reading a story to the whole class, several children may say, "Wow, Sue, that was good and I like your picture, too!"

The quality and variety of reading material written by the students of Room 112 appears to support the view that the writing process can serve as a basis for teaching primary children to read as well as write. In this classroom the students come to understand that reading is their "talk and ideas" written down. When a child writes, he'll most likely want to read his writing aloud, share it with a friend or two, or publish it in a book where all can read it.

Writing not only encourages children to read, but it also enables them to meaningfully apply phonic skills, utilize all the language arts skills and increase their vocabulary. Children who write from personal experiences tend to use bigger words than those found in many basals. If organic spelling is allowed, more sophisticated words will be used.

Writing also promotes the development of a positive self-concept. All children can write, whether it be on their own or through dictation. There are no groups as in reading. Each child has an opportunity to capture the limelight.

Exciting and creative stories can be written by children who are having difficulty with reading, as well as those who are not.

For children to write well, whether it be in first grade or high school, a teacher must have an understanding of the writing process and be able to guide students through it. The writing process includes prewriting activities (motivators, experimenting with language patterns, etc.), composition exercises and editing. Process, not product, must be emphasized.

The teacher must also have a positive attitude toward her students' writing abilities. She must believe that her students can write, especially in the primary grades. Many primary teachers feel that their students aren't ready to begin the writing process. All the writing shared by Room 112 demonstrates the fallacy of that viewpoint. Primary children can write and they can write well!

To be able to write well, the children need to be involved in many pre-writing activities that are based on first hand experiences and enable children to experiment with language. Many ideas have been shared in the beginning of this article. Models of literature must be presented to the children through reading aloud or storytelling. Sentence patterns can be provided in which students substitute their own words. A supportive atmosphere for experimentation must also prevail if students are to learn to write well.

At the elementary level, teachers tend to concentrate on creative writing. Children must be provided, though, with a wide variety of writing experiences. They need to record, react, write from different points of view, persuade or list steps. All this can begin in the primary grades.

After children have been involved in a variety of writing experiences, the next goal is improving the quality of their writing. This can be done through writing workshops. During the writing workshops, students edit one another's writing and provide feedback for improving it. Before beginning a workshop, a

supportive atmosphere must be established in which students feel comfortable critiquing each other's writing. Many teachers feel this editing process can not begin until fourth or fifth grade. But again, if a positive atmosphere prevails and support is given, the editing process can begin in the primary grades. The following procedure was used with beginning second graders.

The children were first shown the book, A Hole, by Robert Kraus. We discussed how the book came to be. The author had to write a first draft, rewrite it, send it to an editor, write it again, have it edited again, and then, hopefully, rewrite it for publication.

The book was then read to the children. It has a definite pattern that can be easily followed by the children. It also ends with the sentence, "A book is to look at." The children were asked if they wanted to publish a book for others to look at. The response was an enthusiastic "yes".

Each child made a first draft. They then teamed with another student and read their papers aloud to each other. After telling each other what they liked about the books, mechanical errors were corrected. Each child rewrote his/her story, illustrated it and stapled it together to make a published book.

With the excitement of "publishing" a book at a peak, The Snowy Day, by Ezra Jack Keats was read aloud. A discussion was held about the different kinds of days the children liked. The children were then asked to write about their favorite days.

These stories were used for a group editing workshop. In this type of workshop, one of the children's stories was reproduced on a ditto just as the child had written it. It is important to seek the author's permission first, as she/he plays an important part in the workshop. Each student in the classroom received a copy of the author's story. The story was read aloud by the author while the other children underlined the parts that they liked best. The children

shared their positive comments with the author and she made notes of it on her paper. The group then offered suggestions as to how the story might be improved. Next, mechanical errors were noted. To aid the children in correcting these errors, charts which list rules and helpful hints should be displayed. Finally, the author took into account all the suggestions given and rewrote the story. After the story was rewritten, it was published, either in our district newsletter, school newsletter or in a class book.

The group editing procedure is used frequently until the children become used to the routine of giving positive comments, suggesting structural and poetic improvement and correcting mechanical errors. The first two steps are the most difficult because the children have not had a great deal of experience with them. But with guidance and patience, they can identify well structured writing, expand sentences or notice when an idea is not expressed completely.

This procedure is used not only to establish a routine for editing, but to also promote a sense of community. Emphasis is on everyone working together to improve each other's writing. It also affords the teacher an opportunity to provide practice for those skills in which her students might be weak.

After the comfortable atmosphere and routine have been established, the children are ready to participate in the next phase of the writing workshop, the small peer-editing groups. These groups consist of 3-5 children. They can be randomly selected or balanced with high and low academic students.

Young children need a purpose for editing and rewriting. Letter writing provides a reason for this. The children can understand why it is important to send a letter with no mistakes. We chose to write to the authors of books that we had been using as springboards for our earlier writing activities.

After the children had composed their letters, they met in their small groups for positive comments and revision suggestions. They then went back to

their desks and made any necessary changes. (Having children write every other line allows for easier editing.)

During this brief revision time, two writing "bugs" for each of the following skill areas are chosen: spelling, capital letter, punctuation, complete sentence. Each "bug" is responsible for reviewing an author's paper with him and making corrections in that skill area. Badges that are worn by the "bugs" foster the importance of the task. After the authors visit each skill area, the paper is brought to the teacher or "editor-in-chief" for a final perusal. The letters are rewritten and sent off with crossed fingers of a reply.

This peer-editing procedure is used throughout the rest of the year, but not for every writing assignment. Children must also be given many opportunities for free writing and experimenting with language. As enjoyable as this editing is, if used with every piece of writing, it would be inhibiting to the students and be very time consuming.

In our classroom, editing was used only if the writing was to be published. This could take the form of a class book, an individual book, or a display on a bulletin board. Children need a reason for rewriting and publishing provides a very tangible one. It also provides another important benefit. Through the published book, the children's writings are shared with many others. These books become the most popular ones in the classroom. Thus, our "Writing Bugs" become "Reading Bugs."